

1.1 Introduction

Pursuant to the United States Department of Defense Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2004 (Public Law 108-87), the United States Department of the Navy (Navy) has closed Naval Station Roosevelt Roads (NSRR) in Puerto Rico. Section 8132 (a) of Public Law 108-87 states that “[n]otwithstanding . . . any other provision of law, the Secretary of the Navy shall close Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, no later than 6 months after enactment of this Act.” Accordingly, on March 31, 2004, NSRR ceased operations as a Naval Station. The base was re-designated as Naval Activity Puerto Rico (NAPR) to maintain a Navy presence and associated security during the disposal process (Figure 1-1). Public Law 108-87, Section 8132(b) further states that “[t]he closure provided for in subsection (a), and subsequent disposal, shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures and authorities contained in the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (Title XXIX of Public Law 101-510; 10 U.S.C. 2687 note).”

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) and Navy regulations implementing NEPA procedures (32 CFR 775), the Navy has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the disposal of NAPR.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (the Commonwealth) created a Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) to oversee the planning process for future private development of NAPR. The LRA developed the *Naval Station Roosevelt Roads Reuse Plan* (CB Richard Ellis et al. December 2004). The potential reuse of the property, as

proposed in the Reuse Plan, is considered in the evaluation of the potential impacts of the alternatives, discussed in Section 4. The content of this EA is consistent with the relevant planning laws of Puerto Rico.

1.2 Background

NSRR was used by the Navy beginning in the early 1940s to support Navy activities in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea as well as for communications and other activities and for support services for the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility (AFWTF) on the island of Vieques. Subsequent to the transfer of the AFWTF to the United States Department of the Interior (DOI) in 2003, Congress enacted Public Law 108-87 on September 30, 2003, charging the Navy with closure and disposal of NSRR in Puerto Rico.

As previously described, the Commonwealth created an LRA to oversee the planning process for future development of NAPR. The LRA is composed of representatives from Commonwealth agencies and led by the Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Commerce and the Puerto Rico Planning Board (PRPB). The Reuse Plan developed by the LRA serves as a guideline for potential future private development of NAPR.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the proposed action is to implement Public Law 108-87 directing the disposal of NAPR, as described in Section 1.1 above. The disposal of the NAPR property will be the responsibility of the Navy; redevelopment will be the responsibility of future owners of the property. This EA is designed to assist the Navy in deciding the most appropriate process for the disposition of NAPR, with the Reuse Plan, as proposed by the LRA, incorporated into the impacts analysis of that disposal.

Recognizing that some type of reuse of NAPR would take place, this EA provides the decision-makers and the public with the information required to understand the potential environmental consequences of the disposal of NAPR in terms of the reasonable foreseeable reuse of the property. To that end, the proposed Reuse Plan inclusive of Phase II has been incorporated into the impacts analysis (Section 4) of the alternatives (described in Section 2). Foreseeable potential impacts that could result from



Source: Geo-Marine, 2005; ESRI, 2004

Figure 1-1
General Location Map
Naval Activity Puerto Rico

redevelopment of the property pursuant to the proposed Reuse Plan are identified in this EA.

1.4 Description and Location of the Proposed Action

1.4.1 NAPR and the Surrounding Area

NAPR is located on approximately 8,665 acres on the eastern end of the island of Puerto Rico. This region of the island is predominantly rural with large sections of rangeland. El Yunque Caribbean National Forest is located approximately 15 miles (24 kilometers [km]) northwest of NAPR. The most developed areas in the immediate vicinity of NAPR are the community of Ceiba, with a population of 18,517, and the community of Naguabo, with a population of 23,753 (U.S. Census 2000), both located directly west and adjacent to NAPR (Figure 1-2). The city of Fajardo, with a population of 40,712 (U.S. Census 2004), is 5 miles (8 km) north of NAPR along Route 3.

NAPR also includes the nearby islands of Piñeros and Cabeza de Perro, which are located approximately 0.5 mile (0.8 km) east of NAPR in the Caribbean Sea. Piñeros Island is approximately 1 mile (1.6 km) by 0.5 mile (0.8 km) in size (310 acres), and Cabeza de Perro is a small island of approximately 0.25 mile (0.4 km) in diameter (30 acres) located 0.25 mile (0.4 km) east of Piñeros (see Figure 1-3).

1.4.2 Lands Addressed in the Environmental Assessment

This EA addresses only the environmental impacts of disposal to non-federal interests. Properties totaling approximately 230 acres would remain in federal ownership; however, operational responsibility for these parcels would be transferred by the Navy to other federal entities (Figure 1-3). Therefore, the following parcels are not part of the disposal action:

- **Bundy Area.** Approximately 125 acres of land in the Bundy area will be transferred to the U.S. Army to be used for training and administrative support facilities.
- **Waterfront Area.** Approximately one acre adjacent to the fuel pier will be transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a boat storage and operations area, and five acres will be transferred to the U.S. Army.
- **Airfield Facilities.** Approximately 10 acres, including a hangar and aircraft parking apron, will be transferred to the DHS.

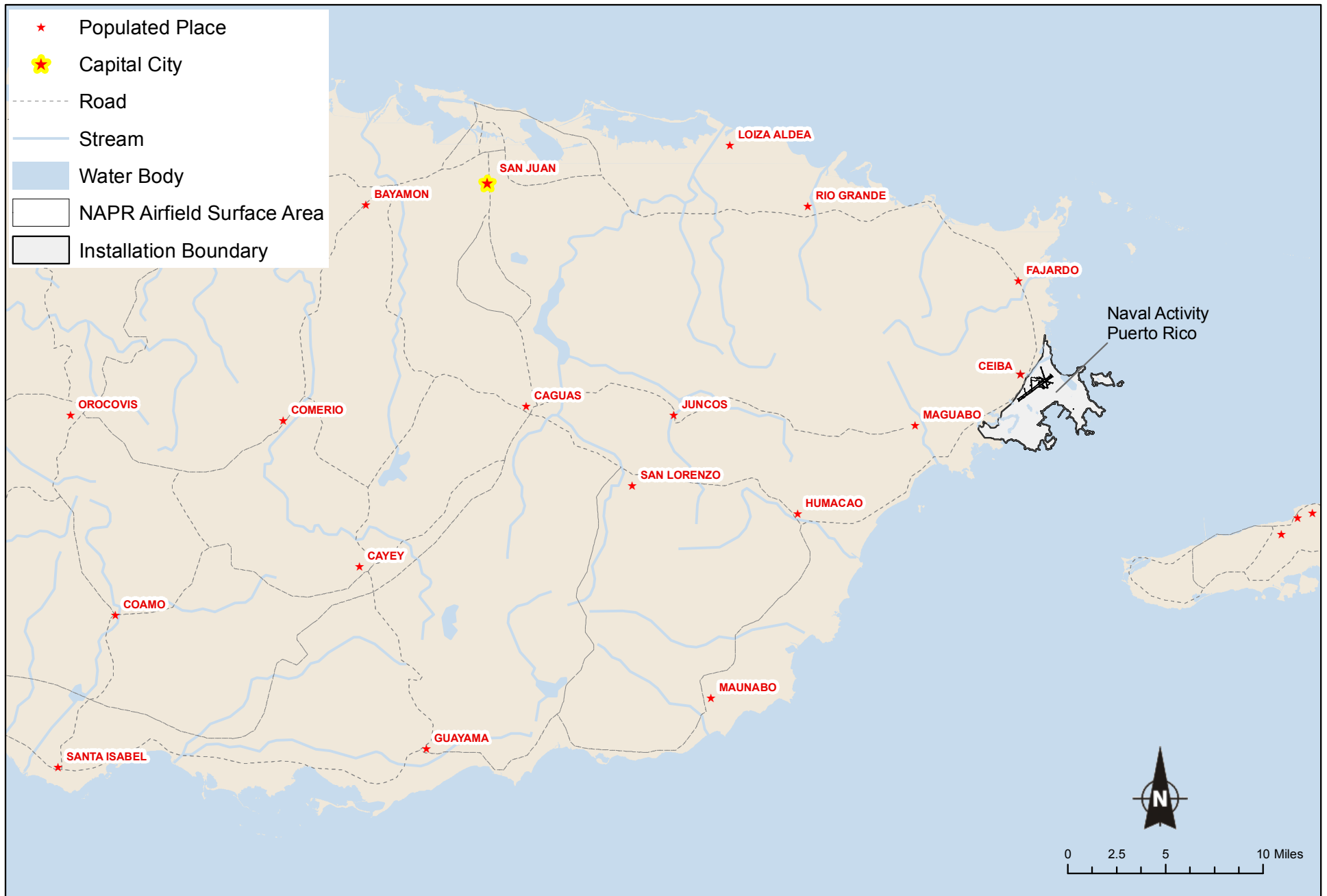
- **South Delicias.** Approximately 30 acres, primarily constituting the former AFWTF Headquarters, will be transferred to the DHS.
- **Punta Medio Mundo.** Approximately 60 acres containing the small arms range will be transferred to the DHS as an active small arms range.

The impacts of the federal transfer, combined with the potential long-term future use impacts of the non-federal disposal and reuse (Phases III and IV of the Reuse Plan), are discussed in Section 5, Cumulative Impacts.

1.5 Scope of the Environmental Assessment

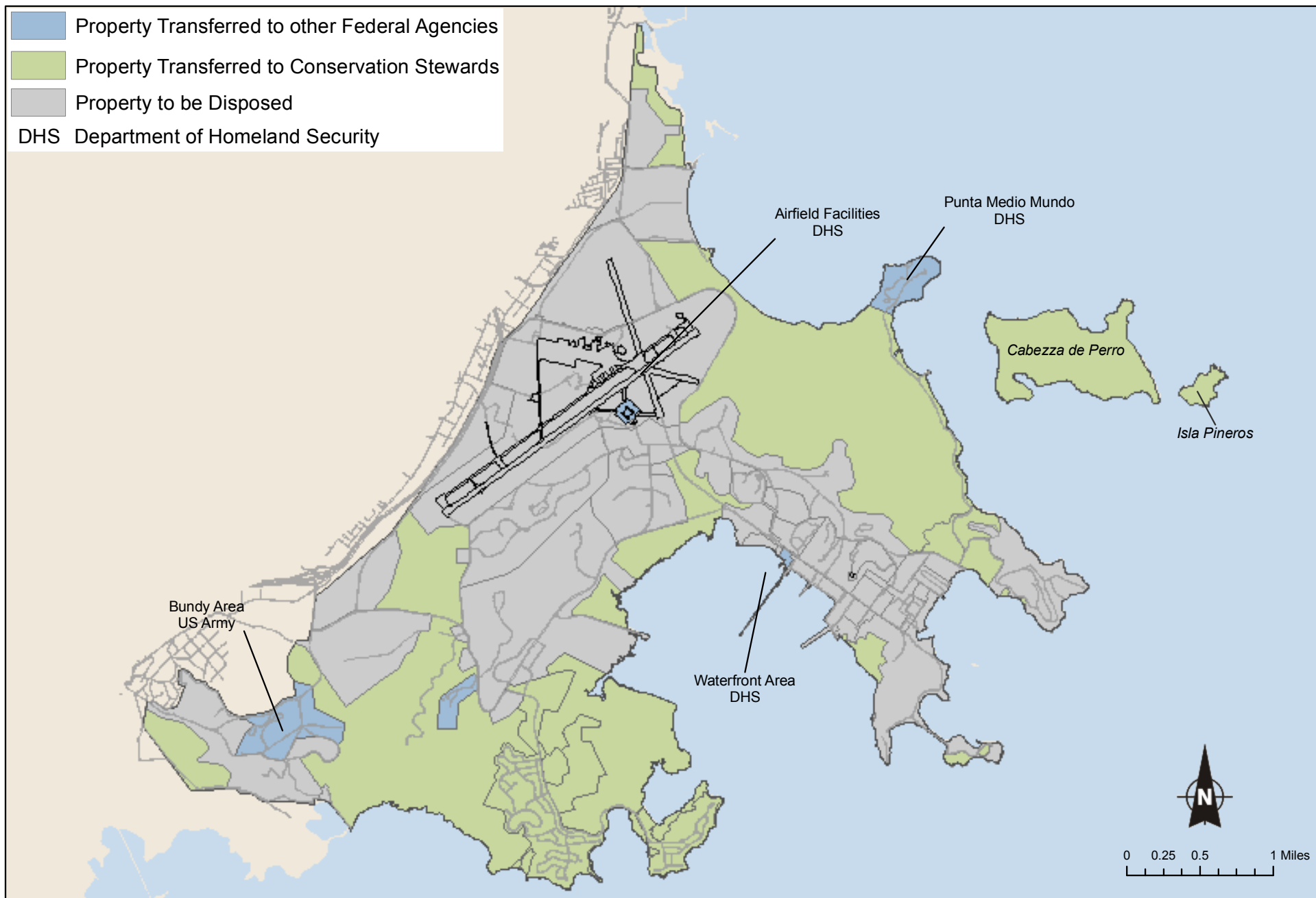
This EA is based on information obtained from review of existing information and documents (see Section 3); various site visits to NAPR conducted during 2004; meetings and telephone conversations with various individuals (see Section 7); and comment letters received during the public scoping period. This EA describes the existing environmental conditions in the planned land-transfer areas; identifies reasonable alternatives; evaluates the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that may result from the proposed disposal of NAPR; and identifies measures to minimize potential adverse effects.

Although the proposed action is the disposal of the excess 8,435-acre property at NAPR, reuse and redevelopment of the property by third-party entities would follow the disposal of NAPR. Therefore, the Reuse Plan, which provides the most current information regarding reasonable future-use scenarios, once transfer of ownership of the property is completed, has been incorporated into the impact discussion in Section 4. The Reuse Plan categorized the proposed redevelopment into four distinct phases (see Section 2.1.1 of this EA). The impacts associated with the proposed reuse, as defined by Phases I and II, are considered indirect impacts of reuse of the predominantly existing infrastructure of NAPR. CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.8[b]) cite growth-inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density, or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems as examples of indirect impacts. The impacts associated with long-range future redevelopment (Phases III and IV), described in Section 4, are based on expansion of the existing infrastructure at NAPR and unforeseen economic factors. This redevelopment



Source: Geo-Marine, 2005; ESRI, 2004

Figure 1-2
Naval Activity Puerto Rico and Vicinity



Source: Geo-Marine, 2005; ESRI, 2004

Figure 1-3
Property to be Transferred to Other Federal Entities or Conservation Stewards
Naval Activity Puerto Rico

and associated impacts are speculative at present and, therefore, are being considered as cumulative effects of the proposed action.

The Navy is preparing an EA rather than an environmental impact statement (EIS) because the proposed action is not expected to have the potential to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. This determination is based on the following conclusions regarding reasonably foreseeable reuse:

- Development and reuse of a majority of the 8,435-acre property would be limited to low-density, residential, and recreational land uses aimed at maximizing use of existing infrastructure and minimizing impacts on natural resources.
- Commercial/industrial development projected for reuse under the preferred alternative would be restricted to previously disturbed and developed commercial/industrial areas.
- All proposed development projects would be subject to review and approval by the Puerto Rico Planning Board and subject to Commonwealth environmental protection laws.

The Navy prepared a *Final Phase I/II Environmental Condition of Property Report* (ECP) (U.S. Navy July 15, 2005) to document the environmental condition of the NAPR property prior to any disposal. This EA is based on the most current available data and information and reasonable assumptions regarding land use and other restrictions that may be implemented to protect human health and the environment as part of the property transfer.

1.6 Public Involvement

As part of the preparation of this EA, the Navy solicited public and agency involvement through the scoping process and interagency stakeholders meetings and will distribute the Draft EA for public comment.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare environmental documentation for the disposal and reuse of NSRR was published in the *San Juan Star* (in English) on April 23, 24, and 25, 2004, and in the *El Nuevo Dia* (in Spanish) on April 24, 25, and 26, 2004. In addition, letters were mailed on April 21, 2004, to approximately 100 interested individuals, agencies, and organizations. The NOI solicited comments regarding the proposed land transfer and notified the public that it had a 30-day opportunity to review

and comment on the draft proposed action. The public scoping/comment period ended on May 31, 2004. Comments received are summarized in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1 Issues Identified in Written Scoping Comments Received

Issue	Addressed in EA Section
Need to complete an environmental impact statement	1.5; 1.6
Need for community participation	1.7
Need to describe proposed future land uses	2.1.1; 3.1.1; 4.1.1
Evaluation of alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative	2
Consideration of ecotourism	2; 3.11; 4.11; 5
Consideration of historical and cultural resources	3.12; 4.12
Consider relocation of passenger and freight ferry facilities from Fajardo to NAPR	4.3; 4.11
Consult with the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources on the Puerto Rico Coastal Zone Management Plan	3.13; 4.13
List potential environmental permits applicable to proposed reuse	To be developed

In addition, the Navy held a stakeholders meeting on May 4, 2004, attended by, among others, representatives of the Puerto Rico Planning Board, the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Puerto Rico Ports Authority (PRPA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the LRA, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The purpose of the meeting was to solicit agency comments/input regarding the scope of the EA. This Draft EA is being published and distributed in English and Spanish. Notices similar to the NOI will be published in local newspapers to make the public aware of their opportunity to comment and, in addition, will be available for public review at the following repositories:

- Biblioteca Pública Municipal Alejandrina Quiñonez Rivera, Urbanización Rossy Valley No. 816, Calle Francisco Gautier, Ceiba, Puerto Rico; and
- Biblioteca Pública Carnegie, 7 Ponce de León Avenue, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Notices also will be available for viewing at the following website, which can be accessed by the public: www.cnrse.navy.mil

1.7 Future Actions

Currently, several issues related to specific aspects of implementing the LRAs Reuse Plan are speculative in nature; therefore, discussion of the potential impacts of reutilization would be speculative at this time. The key issues that will influence future implementation of the Reuse Plan are identified in this EA in order to identify for the decision-makers those issues that are not susceptible to meaningful analysis at this time. Analysis of impacts associated with future development will need to be evaluated under federal and Commonwealth laws, as appropriate, by the entity or entities acquiring the property from the Navy when future development plans are no longer speculative. Once all of NAPR is disposed of by the Navy to the Commonwealth, the private sector, and other federal interests, the Navy cannot be responsible for or influence the reuse of the property.